THE DICKENSIAN

A Magazine for Dickens Lovers
and Monthly Record of the Dickens Fellowship

VOL. I. FEBRUARY, 1905. No. 2.

WHEN FOUND——

THE seventh of the present month was the ninety-third anniversary of the birth of Charles Dickens, and special celebrations of the day have been held in all towns in this country where branches of the Fellowship exist, and in many places in America. In London the President of the Fellowship and youngest son of the novelist, Mr. Henry F. Dickens, K.C., presided over a large gathering, and was supported by many of the Vice-Presidents. The All Around Dickens Club of Boston, U.S.A., for many years past have chosen the day for their annual dinner, at which the genius and personality of the master are reverted to in speeches from members, all of whom, by the way, are ladies, the President being Mrs. Garland. This is the first anniversary since the opening of Dickens's birthplace as a public museum, and no doubt Portsmouth citizens have duly taken advantage of the fact by paying homage to his memory with a visit to the house.

* * *

The contemporary review of *Oliver Twist* which is reprinted in this number is not a little curious from many points of view, and consequently is of extreme interest. The writer utters some solid truths regarding the genius of Dickens as it revealed itself to him then, which are as solid truths to-day, sixty-six years after the publication of the book. There are also statements made which must have been as fatuous then as the flight of more than half a century has proved to be inaccurate. In the last paragraph of the article the writer suggests, rather emphatically, that twenty years hence *Oliver Twist* will not be read except among pure Londoners; and "that it or its brethren" will not "add much future reputation to England and its array of fictionists." Comment would be superfluous. But the article is clever, penetrating, and valuable.

* * *

The portrait of the President of the Dickens Fellowship, which forms the frontispiece to the present number, is reproduced from a photograph taken in America. Mr. Henry F. Dickens is the sixth son of the novelist, and was born on 16th January, 1849, at No. 1, Devonshire Terrace. He was called to the bar in 1873, and is at present the Recorder of Maidstone. It will be remembered that Mr. Dickens was the Editor of *The Extraordinary Gazette*, which he printed himself from sets of type given to him by his father's Assistant Editor, W. H. Wills, and which he published for family circulation only.

We are always having fresh evidence of the remarkable influence for good exercised by the works of Dickens, and the recent experience of Mr. Bransby Williams, the famous impersonator of Dickens's characters, is exceptionally interesting in this connection. He impersonated at the Tivoli, London, Mr. Peggotty, at the moment when he is stricken with grief by the news of Little Em'ly's flight. And this is the letter he received a day or two later:—

"*To* MR. BRANSBY WILLIAMS. "LONDON, *January 13th*, 1905.

"SIR,—I have no doubt you never think of yourself as a preacher. I was at the Tivoli Wednesday evening. Since then I have decided to go home to my uncle. He is a fisherman, and I was brought up by him. I left home, as a lot of others do, but am going back, and by the time you get this I shall be with him. He is good. You must be good to act it the way you do.

"I shall try now I am going back to him to be a comfort and help to him, and shall always remember and pray for you, and if the prayers of a fallen one will help, you should be helped to great things.

"Yours gratefully, ——."

* * *

There is, however, another kind of influence a real knowledge and appreciation of the novelist's works may have, and it has recently been revealed by a Sydney solicitor who brought an action against a newspaper that incidentally alluded to him as having "all the unscrupulousness of Dodson and Fogg, without the astuteness ascribed by Dickens to those two legal characters." The solicitor claimed £2,000 damages, but succeeded in obtaining only £250. Frequently one is apt to characterise a person one dislikes as a Uriah Heep, a Pecksniff, a Chadband, a Stiggins, but it is nevertheless risky.

* * *

At the last annual meeting of the Fellowship it was decided that branches that had a membership roll of 100 should be entitled to direct representatives on the headquarters council. So far only four branches have availed themselves of this privilege, namely, Manchester, Portsmouth, Sheffield, and Birmingham, and their representatives are, respectively, Mr. Arthur Humphreys, Mr. B. W. Matz, Mr. R. W. Dodsworth, and Mr. E. J. Timings.

* * *

A new booklet of interest is to be published immediately by the Lyceum Press, Liverpool, entitled *The Associations of Charles Dickens with Liverpool*, by C. C. Bowes, with an introduction by Edgar A. Browne, F.R.C.S. It deals with the visits of Dickens to Liverpool, giving a verbatim report of his speech in Mount Street in 1844, a description of Whitechapel on Saturday night, and a full account of the banquet in St. George's Hall in 1869.

* * *

At the meeting of the Fellowship in London on March 1st, Mr. Harry Furniss will give a lecture entitled "A Sketch of Boz: His Art, his Artists, and his Admirers." It will be illustrated by a series of lantern slides, chiefly from Mr. Furniss's own drawings.

WELLERISMS AND WIT

By SIR WILLIAM H. BAILEY
(PRESIDENT OF THE MANCHESTER BRANCH)

CHARLES DICKENS as a health resort is worth the consideration of medical men. A good dose of Sam Weller increases the capacity of the lungs for oxygen, and therefore may be recommended with confidence as of value to those who are prescribed the open-air treatment. Sufferers in mind, body, or estate should know that an ounce of Sam is worth more than a pound of drugs. Modern medical practice has placed physic in a minor position—the art of giving nature a chance has become popular. And who, indeed, can doubt that laughter is a greater friend of humanity than a third-class doctor ?

Recently a critic brought forward evidence of what we call virtues in Dickens, which he asserts are defects. Dickens is accused of loving grotesque and ludicrous exaggerations and distortions. The reply is that all caricatures are distortions of features or of ideas. Science is the perception, acceptance, and expression of the perfect, and fine art is the science of beauty, as music is the science of melody. An exaggeration may be both witty and humorous, for humour has its foundation in the imperfect; in the clumsy sentence that means one thing and may mean another; in the want of proportion; in the adding up the year of our Lord in the pounds column ; in a grotesque comparison. This exaggeration enables poor dull mortals to see, with the velocity of the lightning flash, what is meant.

Sam Weller has both wit and humour. I have tried to give a definition of humour, but I cannot describe wit, and have failed to find anyone who can. It is as difficult to define wit as to get a word from the dictionary to rhyme with "silver." The Irish have wit and some humour, and the Scotch are the most humorous people in the world, but they have no wit. Their literature is full of humour, as witness Dean Ramsay's *Anecdotes*, *Life of George Buchanan*, *Lives of the Lord Chancellors*, many of whom were Scotch, and their favourite songs, "The Laird of Cockpen," "Kate Dalrymple," "Come under my Pladdie," "Robin Tamson's Smithy." Sydney Smith slandered the Scotch when he said they could not see a joke without a surgical operation. He amended this later and said it was a corkscrew only that was required.

Admirers of Dickens know that Sam Weller's sayings and doings are chiefly in the *Pickwick Papers*, but it must not be forgotten that he also appears with his father and his son, Tony Weller, in *Master Humphrey's Clock*. Pickwick was issued in monthly numbers in April, 1836, and immediately seized upon the public. Only 400 copies of the early numbers were printed, yet before many issues had been sent out, 40,000 copies per month were eagerly demanded. It was hailed as a supreme achievement. It was a new departure in literature. For nearly the first time in English literature wit and humour differed absolutely from the drivel of the pot-house. Merry, innocent jocularities could be read by the young without fear and by the old without disgrace, for the new

fun was a healthy method, based on the rules of prudence. It was a novel and cheap form of portable comic opera for the inglenook of the cottage, the villa, or the castle. Sam was irrepressible in his epics of drollery, and continues to be a permanent endowment to the gaiety of the English nation, for he will for all time create merriment as the Sancho Panza of that personation of kindness and humanity, Mr. Pickwick.

His chief wit consists of ludicrous comparisons, common not only among workmen in London, but often found in varying degrees among the artisans throughout this country. I have heard Lincolnshire farmers use similar comparative jocularities: "Like Peggy Pow's pig that died of hunger with its nose in the trough." I have heard Yorkshiremen say, "She is like Natterin' Nan of Bradford, who said that nobody at the top of the earth but me and the Lord knows what I have had to put up with." Lancashire hand-loom weavers had a considerable reputation in this direction.

The germs of Sam's philosophy were picked up by Dickens as a youth from the working-folk of Rochester. With the keen vision of genius he was always alert to gather flowers by the way, to pluck the modest buttercups and daisies, bluebells, and tiny forget-me-nots of the fields, and the wallflowers, sweet-wiliams, vilolets, and roses of the cottage gardens of the English lanes, and of them he made "a thousand fragrant posies," whose bloom will never perish and whose perfume delights this generation, and will give pleasure to those who come after us, so long as English literature exists.

Sam was always diplomatic, and suited his humour to the occasion. "That's a self-evident proposition, as the cat's-meat-man said to the servant maid when she called him no gentleman." Or when he gives that intimation, "Allow me to express a hope as you won't reduce me to extremities; in saying wich I merely quote wot the nobleman said to the fractious pennywinkle, ven he wouldn't come out of his shell by means of a pin, and he consequently began to be afeerd that he should be obliged to crack him in his parlour door."

Sam's first introduction to the public is at the White Hart Hotel in the Borough. He had a bright red handkerchief wound in an unstudied manner round his neck, and an old white hat was carelessly thrown on one side of his head. When asked by Jingle about Doctors' Commons, he at once concludes that Jingle wants to get a marriage licence, and proceeds to tell him a wonderful story about his father, a widower, who called at Doctors' Commons on other business, and before he knew where he was, a licence had been foisted on him, which caused him to marry the widow who kept the "Markis of Granby," Dorking. After this Sam meets Mr. Pickwick, and is engaged as servant to travel with him.

When he is cross-questioned by the thin gentleman at the hotel he objects to being called his friend. "My friend," said the thin gentleman. "You're one o' the adwice gratis order," thought Sam, "or you wouldn't be so werry fond o' me all at once." But he only said, "Well, sir." "My friend," said the thin gentleman, with a conciliatory hem, "have you got many people staying here now? Pretty busy. Eh?" "Oh, werry well, sir," replied Sam; "we shan't be bankrupts, and we shan't make our fort'ns. We eats our biled mutton without capers,

and don't care for horse-radish wen ve can get beef." "Ah," said the little man, "you're a wag, an't you?" "My eldest brother was troubled with that complaint," said Sam, "it may be catching—I used to sleep with him." "This is a curious old house of yours," said the little man, looking round him. "If you'd sent word you was a-coming, we'd ha' had it repaired," replied the imperturbable Sam. The wonderful aptness of his illustrations is shown by his remark when he is handed a summons as a witness, and receives 10*s.* 6*d.* After looking at the money with admiration, he says, "Nothing can be fairer than

MR. WELLER'S WATCH

Reproduced from a drawing by Phiz for the original edition of *Master Humphrey's Clock*

that," and continues, "Then the next question is, what the devil do you want with me, as the man said when he saw the ghost."

Sam's wit is hereditary, for when he chaffs his father for marrying a widow the old man retorts, "You know what the counsel said, Sammy, as defended the gen'l'm'n as beat his wife with the poker venever he got jolly. And arter all, my lord, says he, 'It's a amable weakness.'" Sam philosophically consoles his father by remarking, "Well, it's no use talking about it now. It's over, and can't be helped, and that's one consolation, as they always says in Turkey, ven they cut the wrong man's head off."

Dickens's selection of the name of Pickwick has received considerable attention. The origin of the name is obvious as the scene between

Pickwick and Weller, when, after the trial of Bardell *v.* Pickwick, the members of the club take a coach to Bath, and Sam Weller is very much astonished and bursts with indignation to see the name of Pickwick painted thereon. He calls his master's attention to this outrage, and appears to consider that the indignity should be resented forthwith, and the aggravation of it is that not only is the name used, but *Moses* had been added. Mr. Pickwick tells him to get on the coach, or he will be left behind. Full of astonishment, Sam bottles his wrath. It appears that Moses Pickwick was the proprietor of the Bath coaches.

The Pickwick Club is the chief one of a great number of clubs mentioned in Dickens's works. I find that eighteen clubs are named by him altogether. There was another club started by Sam and his father, and the old gentleman is made into President, when the club of *Master Humphrey's Clock* is holding its meeting upstairs, and Miss Denton, the housekeeper, and her friend Mr. Slithers, the barber, and the two Wellers are the members.

Old Weller, when elected President, very laboriously pulled a big double-case silver watch out of his pocket, and having knocked it on the table half a dozen times, he said, "That is the title and emblem of this 'ere society. Sammy, reach them two stools this way for vacant chairs." His inaugural address was: "Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Weller's watch is wound up and now in a-going order." The old coachman presided with dignity and observed parliamentary procedure. When his son named the barber, he suggested the better word was hairdresser, as more soothing to the feelings. "But supposing he wasn't a hairdresser?" Sam says. The President retorts, "All the greater necessity to call him one, as in another place every gentleman is called a honourable, whether he is one or not, and it is proper to keep up that 'ere pleasant and universal fiction."

It goes without saying that the chief function of literature is the giving of knowledge. The social importance of innocent fun is great, and among English authors Charles Dickens takes front rank. Satire is a form of humour and a useful instrument of civilisation, and many reforms have been the direct result of its use by such writers as Dickens. Satirical fun also gives an increase of personal value, and panders to the vanity of the man who uses it. It is founded on cruelty, and is habitually used by vicious people. For instance, where is there greater evidence of a depraved condition than in the man who jokes about his mother-in-law? There are many comical things in this world that are not injurious. Charles Lamb tantalised Coleridge by the most idiotic jokes. Coleridge said to Lamb, "In that way you make both ends meet." Lamb replied, "Yes, and butcher's meat, too." It was absurd and aggravating.

The railing of the hungry and lazy fellow in one of the comedies of Plautus is excellent fooling, and injures nobody. He curses the man who invented sundials, because they fix the time when men should have their meals. He said that his stomach was "a better sundial than any of these." And of such harmless merriment is the humour of Sam Weller, who is among the amenities of life as a cheap and easy means for spending leisure time, happily within the reach of all classes of the community.

OLIVER TWIST

A CONTEMPORARY REVIEW

[We reprint below a review of *Oliver Twist*, which appeared in the *Monthly Review* for January, 1839. The writer of the review, however, introduced numerous and lengthy passages from the book, and these we have been compelled to omit. In every case, however, we have plainly stated where the omission occurs, and generally intimated in brackets the exact bearing on the passage. In no case has the actual text of the article been tampered with in any way.—Ed.]

ALTHOUGH the greater portion of this tale has appeared in the periodical numbers of *Bentley's Miscellany*, and may therefore be considered to lie out of our way, yet there are special reasons why we should devote a few pages to the work, now that it is in its finished state. In the first place, about half of the third volume is entirely new to the public; in the second place, we have reason to presume that the majority of our country readers are unacquainted with the production, extremely popular though it be among certain classes and in the metropolis; and thirdly, at the risk of being called heretics, insensible, or undiscerning, we feel bound to speak in a strain of the work much more moderate in regard to its merits than has lately and hitherto been the language of the majority of our contemporary journalists. After the slightest possible glance at the outline of the story, we shall quote two or three passages of considerable length from the latter portion of it, these passages being amongst the most admired and eulogised parts, if we are to judge from the frequency from which they have been cited in the newspapers and periodicals that have recently been loudest in their praises; and then offer such observations upon the production as a whole, as well as upon the features of our extracts, as appear to us just and necessary.

The story of Oliver Twist consists rather of a succession of sketches of character, scenes, and events as these are supposed, with much seeming of truth, to exist among London paupers, pauper officers, the relatives and friends of paupers, receivers of stolen goods, thieves, etc., than of a cunningly conceived plot, or a progressively arresting tale, when each chapter enchains the attention, not only with a sustained, but increasing power. We are in the "Parish Boy's Progress" introduced to a foundling, who runs away from his master, gets among thieves, innocently enough, and innocent continuing. Magistrates, benevolent persons, thieves and their accomplices or associates, are hence brought under the reader's eye,—a ruffian housebreaker, Sikes, Nancy, his girl, who is not thoroughly depraved, and a reprobate, unmatched villain Jew, Fagin by name, being leading characters on the one side of Twist, while a family of Maylies, etc., range and act on brighter principles. In the course of the work there are many comic pieces and hits; but towards its close, where the worthless and bad have to meet with the novelist's retribution, and the good have to be rewarded, grave and serious passages predominate. It is to the latter that we are about to direct special notice.

To apprehend the position of parties and the progress of the story in the following scene, let the reader be conducted to one of the lowest dens in one of the lowest streets of the eastern quarter of London, viz. Rosemary Lane, the very Paradise of Old Clothing Jews, and suppose the housebreaker Sikes to have a little before the break of day brought to Fagin his night's harvest. The Jew has been waiting for the ruffian's return with unutterable anxiety; for he has discovered that Nancy holds intercourse with "the benevolent old gentleman," Oliver's friend and patron, and thence concludes that she has betrayed the gang. The discovery has to be communicated; a task of no ordinary danger to himself and to others, seeing though the housebreaker be of the most brutalised habits and prone to savage passion, one virtue, or human feeling rather, lives and lingers amid a thousand crimes,—an occasional tenderness and fidelity to Nancy:—

[Quotation omitted in which the Jew hints at Nancy's disloyalty to Sikes.]

Nancy's supposed betrayal is communicated:—

[The extract here omitted tells of Sikes's wild fury at Fagin's information that Nancy has been seen in conversation with Rose Maylie.]

The ruffian holds on his headlong course, not muttering a word, nor relaxing a muscle till he reaches his own door:—

[Here we omit the extract telling the story of the ghastly murder.]

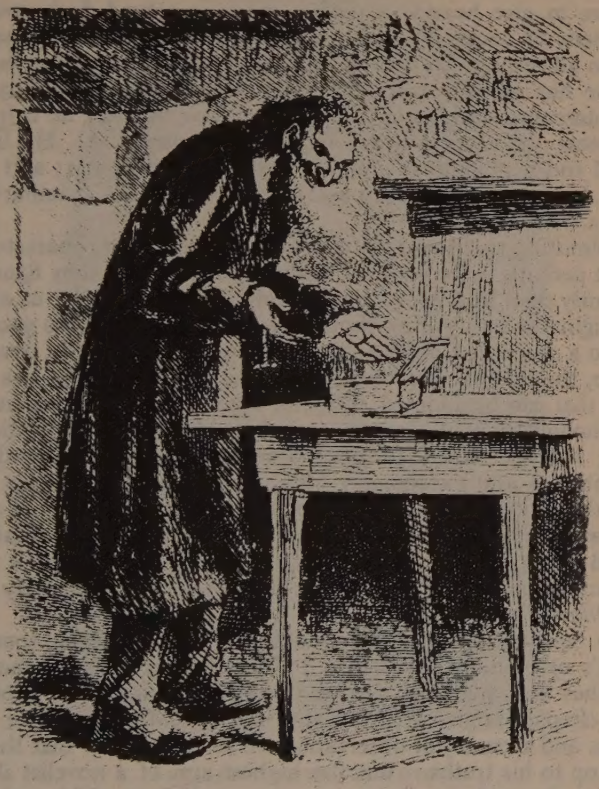
The after-scene in which the murderer feels, thinks, and acts are not less dreadful.* The murderer wanders at random, but can never get away from the vicinity of London; he is constantly retracing his steps; constantly, whenever he enters a public house, or encounters persons on the road, hearing of the dreadful deed he himself has so lately perpetrated. He is haunted by the most frightful visions,—the voice and speech of men are welcome to him, even although the talk is to be about his own terrible crime. He on one occasion finds relief in exerting himself beyond all others in extinguishing a fire; with many other incidents and touches of description or sentiment that work up to a very high pitch the force of the picture. A few sentences in a fragmentary way will convey an idea of the peculiar sort of intensity to which the author can carry out his delineations.* The murderer's infatuation and bewilderment becomes still more apparent; fear and remorse rendering him aimless and their sport. The very dog, hitherto so attached and faithful, distrusts and deserts him:—

[The extract here omitted tells of Sikes's attempt to kill his dog.]

There are many other details in the picture which represents the close of Sikes's career, who is accidentally strangled by the rope which he employs to effect an escape from the officers of justice, where labour, art, and singular power of colouring are manifest. These, however, we must pass over, that we may come to the Jew who is arraigned at the bar at the Old Bailey, as an accessory and accomplice, and, of course, on a capital charge. And here, as hitherto, from the very nature of the story, and that our succeeding observations may be more fully tested, our extracts must occupy a much greater space than we can willingly spare to fictions in general. The occasion, however, is peculiar,

* The extracts from the book omitted are portions revealing Sikes's feelings during his dogged wanderings through London to Hampstead.

and requires a peculiar treatment, especially as we could not do justice to Mr. Dickens's highest efforts and most powerful performances without giving the following pictures. It will be seen that he has at his readiest command a host of apparently slender circumstances, by means of which, in a combined form, the mightiest results are produced; and that, although these circumstances or associations dwell as if on the surface of things, they guide by the artist's manner of disposal to the



FAGIN

From a drawing made for the American Diamond Edition by S. Eytinge, jun.

deepest and darkest chambers of the soul. His descriptions, too, it will be observed, are perfectly truthful and natural. Now for the arraignment.

[The extract here omitted describes the scene in court when Fagin is on trial.]

Follow the felon to that cell from which he is to walk direct to the scaffold. Watchers are his companions:—

[The extract here omitted describes Fagin's last night in the condemned cell.]

We have already expressed an opinion in regard to the power and combining talent of Mr. Dickens, and of the easy yet artistic manner in which he can work up his pictures by a diffusive and copious command of a great number of accessories. He seems to have made himself master of human feelings and actions in so far as they are developed in the lower or middling walks of London life, and what is more, he cherishes a good-natured sympathy with all, entering, as it were, into the condition of his most immoral characters so as in his portraiture to give heartily a perfect image, a rotund flesh and blood embodiment of each—becoming thus the creator of new personages; but yet in all respects so natural in their lineaments that one feels convinced he has actually met with them in the streets and had more or less intercourse with them. He is a humane satirist; he is free from all bitterness; he never indulges in invective of any kind. His language is natural and happily wedded to his vivifying conceptions; and last but not least, he is quite unaffected and far above attempts at imitation, that is, he is a true originalist.

But admitting that these features and excellences are characteristic of Boz, and perhaps in no other of his several works do they figure more prominently than in the tale immediately under review, let us ask if he be an originalist that will or should be followed? Has his genius cast itself into a shape that ought to be imitated? is his mode of treating the mediocre, the humble and the wretched subjects which he has chosen, the best that can be adopted, either for the sake of producing humorous or melancholy pictures, or, in regard to higher considerations, for teaching striking moral lessons?—for there may be abundance of sentimentalism and exceedingly little, or the reverse, of what is pure and worthy in its effects upon virtue and the best principles of conduct.

Now we have come to an opinion not of the most favourable kind in regard to Mr. Dickens's merits as a writer of fiction or as a reprover of vice and an amender of the heart, having our eye particularly directed to his *Oliver Twist*.

As to construction, the story does not by any means come up to Fielding's or Smollett's fictions. It is, as before hinted, a mere string of sketches that might be carried to any length, or if cut short at any part, a chapter might wind up the indefinite thread. The author's closeness and accuracy of observation are so remarkable that there need be no stop to his truths. But the highest aim of a novelist should be to enchain the reader's mind upon one central group of life and scenery, so as to produce an abiding lesson of a tangible and definite character, and so as to place, as it were, the spectator upon a summit, whence he might survey regions far and wide around to the enlargement and refinement of his sensibilities.

A mere succession of sketches no ways necessarily joined, or as is the case in the present instance, often forcibly grouped and without due proportions being observed, however clever or powerful each one figure may be, is mere continuation and a desultory work that must fail of the highest effects which fiction may produce. It is true that writing for a periodical and undertaking to supply each succeeding month an equivalent to the piece that has sparkled immediately before, must help to occasion starts, and at intervals slender and loose joinings. But it

does not appear from anything that Boz has yet done that he is equal to the demands of a regular novel, or that he is willing to throw himself at once upon a three-volumed production simultaneously published. He finds it wiser, we believe, to keep himself before the public by means of a succession of forcible pictures, attractively framed, than by one great but compact piece—the former method having this manifest

STATUETTE OF OLIVER TWIST
From an engraving by H. Ball of a daguerreotype after Mayall

advantage besides—that it allows and tempts newspaper and periodical editors to insert such striking individualised pieces as may suit their humour and the vacancies in their columns, and thus to keep the author always and fully before the public.

As to the moral qualities of *Oliver Twist* we think that the above extracts, powerful as they are, and evincing searchings of the human soul of extraordinary compass and depth, ought not to rank with many passages and pictures in our language where the heart is laid bare, and the immortal nature of man is made to be seen in its loftiest stirrings, its severest writhings. There is with Boz too much of muscular agony,

so that his most laboured pictures have fully more of the horrible in them than of the awful and grand.

Again in the present tale or string of stories, it looks as if he revelled, while painting low or degraded nature, among objects which, unless merely subservient to finer and higher elements equally well drawn and finished, never can awaken our nobler sympathies, nor prune and invigorate the wings of these awakened sensibilities. On this account, we cannot place our author among those novelists who are models in regard to the inculcation of moral sentiments and the lessons that refine while they delight.

Not that Mr. Dickens is an immoral writer. It is not in his nature to be such; it is the furthest possible thing from his intention, evidently, to write for the mere sake of gain, of entertainment, or of merely harmless fiction. He has high and pure aims; nor can he have failed of doing good, morally speaking. See how he identifies himself uniformly with the oppressed; how with his sly yet effective humour he has exposed systematic and institutional abuses; and what is more, how forcibly he shows that the vilest in the population is far more an object of commiseration than of anger. Still we must recur to the opinion already given, that neither his subjects nor his manner of treating them, especially in *Oliver Twist*, can ever entitle him to the highest rank of our moral fictionists. He is a Crabbe rather than a Richardson, or a Goldsmith; but then he is twenty times superior to Sterne, or rather has not one particle of that sentimentality which intoxicates and vitiates while it seems merely to etherealise.

Yet were it not the purity of his nature and the excellence of his purpose, joined to admirable tact and delicate taste, it would be impossible for Boz to preserve the moral influence which he undoubtedly possesses, or to avoid offending against feelings which none can safely touch. On this account, tenderly and warily though he has borne himself, it would be dangerous for a less skilful and considerate performer to adventure after him; and therefore we advise everyone to eschew him as a model. Who but he, that would attempt such an experiment, could have represented the character of Nancy in full, who had descended far from the ways of virtue and leagued herself with desperadoes and robbers, and yet not only have preserved her a true woman in various respects, but never to have trenched upon delicacy or written a word that can send a blush to the face of innocence? In this single instance alone there is a fine mastery; and for this as well as many other excellences we admire Mr. Dickens; but who shall follow him and be so faultless?

These few and hurriedly uttered sentiments indicate what we think of the author's works in general, and of *Oliver Twist* especially. We have spoken honestly, and have now only to add that whoever supposes that the history of the "Parish Boy's Progress,"—after reading it at one or two sittings, or without any considerable intervals, from beginning to end—will be as popular twenty years hence as it has been and is now, have tastes and expectations very different from those entertained by us. The production may continue to find favour among pure Londoners; but elsewhere we have no idea of its maintaining its past popularity, nor that it or its brethren will ever add much future reputation to England and its array of fictionists.

A CRITIC CRITICISED*

By J. W. T. LEY

MR. SHORE'S book will not take a high place among Dickens literature. It is divided into three parts. The first gives a synopsis of the chief events in the novelist's life. It is entitled "Personal and Literary History," and it would have pleased the heart of Mr. Gradgrind, for it is "facts—nothing but facts." This, however, is accounted for by the fact that the whole book consists only of eighty pages. The second part, which is entitled "Critical Estimate of Dickens's Works," seems to me to consist of assertions with very little argument to support them. I am free to confess that I agree with most of the "assertions," but when one claims to be writing a "critical estimate" one should show something to support one's opinions.

There is one assertion, however, which I am glad to endorse. "This" says Mr. Shore, "is no place to enter upon a discussion of style, for our present purpose it will suffice to define literary style as ability to express oneself clearly without outraging any of the refinements of language. Judged by this standard, Dickens was a great artist, he could conjure up for us by means of words alone detailed portraits of men and women, and could convey the 'atmosphere' of scenery alike in town and country."

The author tells us that Dickens's choicest gift was that of characterisation. Even the "heretics" will admit, I think, that "no English writer, with the exception of Shakespeare, has drawn so many characters which have become 'household words,'" but I am prepared to argue that Dickens's choicest gift was Humour. All his other gifts, and everything he ever did were dependent on his humour. Mr. Shore makes some curious selections of characters, and some surprising omissions. He tells us, for instance, that Dickens has given to the world some of its most charming little women, and he singles out for mention Belle Wilfer, Dora Spenlow, and Lizzie Hexam. With the first two selections we shall all agree, but are we all convinced that Lizzie Hexam is one of Dickens's successes? And, why; oh why? has Ruth Pinch been passed by? One rather cavils, too, at the assertion that Sydney Carton is not quite a success, and it is somewhat surprising to find Peggotty classed among those characters whose success depends only on their eccentricities of manner or of thought.

Mr. Shore says two things which are worth remembering. First of all, he points out that a test of living art is that it does not die of old age, and does not even grow old-fashioned or out of date. And judged by this test, he says that Dickens is a success. All his books, though some of them are forty, fifty, and even sixty years old, "are fresh and sweet; there is no musty savour in them; they are alive not dead." Secondly, he says that "literary popularity is of two sorts: some writers are popular with the critical, some with those who are not so; and a few—the greatest—are popular with both." And with these, Mr. Shore justly classes Dickens. The critic cannot be blind to the master's faults, but he loves him the better for them. Dickens defies the critic, and therein lies absolute proof of his greatness.

* Bell's Miniature Series of Great Writers—*Dickens*: By W. Teignmouth Shore: London, George Bell and Sons. 1s. net.

And now let us look at Mr. Shore's last chapter on "*David Copperfield* as an example of Dickens's genius." I am not going to cavil at our author's suggestion that Steerforth and his mother, and Rosa Dartle are failures, but it requires moral courage to assert that Mrs. Gummidge is a complete success, while Dan'l Peggotty is a failure. Let me confess at once that I am with the late George Gissing in regard to Mrs. Gummidge. Her final conversion is as unconvincing to me as is Mr. Tackleton's. Mr. Shore, however, thinks it is perfectly natural. But Dan'l Peggotty a failure! This is what our author says —"Mr. Peggotty . . . seems to us a failure, he is so obvious; therefore true to life, it may be argued." If Mr. Shore admits this possibility surely he can hardly justify his opinion that Dan'l is a failure? Is it fair to say that because a character is "obvious" and true to life, he is a failure? It seems to me illogical. Listen, though—"But Dickens meant him to be a heroic and pathetic figure. He does indulge in heroics, his pathos somehow is not contagious, and his wild-goose chase of Em'ly is a too fantastic undertaking for one who is meant to be a hard-headed if soft-hearted man." Well: perhaps the "wild-goose" chase is a fantastic undertaking: it is melodramatic, at any rate. But surely it is a bold thing to say that Dickens meant Mr. Peggotty to be a heroic figure? Have we the right to assume any such thing? And is there really a false note in the pathos of the scene in the old boat after the receipt of the fatal letter? I only want to know —as Rosa Dartle would say.

Possibly David's mother is not a success, but I hardly like Mr. Shore's description of her as "a flabby, pretty person." That word "flabby" somehow does not strike me as apt. I am with our author when he says that Mr. Micawber stands above the need of praise. There is not a man or woman who will dispute the assertion that this character alone would make *David Copperfield* immortal. I am with him, too, in the distinction he draws between Agnes and Dora—"The one appeals to our admiration, to our judgments; the other to our pity, to our hearts." But is he quite just, is he quite on the mark, when he says "Miss Trotwood and her loyal friend, Mr. Dick . . . are a delectable couple, without one touch of caricature, a pair of amazing eccentrics, drawn with the deftest skill"? This is perfectly true, of course, but it seems to me a somewhat curt dismissal of Betsey Trotwood, whom I love best of all the master's characters, and who is, to my way of thinking, his most successful piece of work.

SIR HENRY IRVING AND THE PORTSMOUTH BRANCH

OUR distinguished Vice-President, Sir Henry Irving, commenced a farewell tour at Portsmouth, on Monday, January 23rd. A letter was forwarded to him from the Portsmouth Branch, welcoming him to Portsmouth, and regretting that it would be the last occasion on which he would tread the boards of the theatre which is the successor of Mr. Crummles's Thespian Temple. Sir Henry sent the following reply:—"DEAR MR. MAGGS,—Many thanks for your cordial letter. I am very glad to have the good wishes of lovers of Dickens, who was so true and staunch a friend of the dramatic profession, and I am much interested in the excellent work by which you and your colleagues are helping to keep his memory green.—Faithfully yours, HENRY IRVING."

THE DICKENS BALL

THE Dickens Ball, held in the Empress Rooms of the Royal Palace Hotel, Kensington, on the 30th of January, was, so far as concerned the West Ham Hospital (for whose benefit it was organised), a great success. Some five hundred leading members of society gathered together in the good cause of charity, and there is no doubt great benefit will accrue thereby. About one third of the dancers were attired in dresses representing characters from the great novelist's works, and although it cannot be said that all were sufficiently accurate to be recognisable, there were many of whom it might justly be said they had walked out of the books. Most noticeable amongst these were those of the party of Mr. and Mrs. Henry F. Dickens, which included the grandchildren of the author, representing characters from *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Mrs. Jarley (Miss Elaine Dickens), Little Nell (Miss Olive Dickens), Grandfather (Mr. Henry Charles Dickens), Mrs. Quilp (Mrs. H. C. Dickens), the Marchioness (Mrs. Ernest Hawksley), Dick Swiveller (Mr. Ernest Hawkesley), who, with Kit (Mr. Noel Stoker) and Jerry (Mr. Mawby), furnished one of the attractions of the evening by the very graceful dancing of the lancers. Two other sets, composed of characters from *Nicholas Nickleby* and from *A Tale of Two Cities*, added to the enjoyment of the unique occasion. There were many Dolly Vardens, the best of whom was undoubtedly Miss Sissy Cox, and among other characters represented were Mr. and Mrs. Mantalini, Mr. Folair, Madeline Bray, Fanny Squeers, 'Tilda Price, Lucy Manette, Sydney Carton, Sir Mulberry Hawk, Lord Verysopht, Frank Cheeryble, Mrs. Bardell, Serjeant Buzfuz, Florence Dombey, Mr. Micawber, and many more too numerous to mention. One of the most striking and successful was that of Morleena Kenwigs, impersonated by Miss Rita Martin, whilst Mr. Pluck (Mr. Eric Marshall) stood out conspicuously, but it was noticeable that neither Sam Weller nor Mr. Pickwick found impersonators.

The Ball, organised by Mrs. Elphinstone Maitland and Lady Maud B. Wilbraham, was under the patronage of H.R.H. Princess Christian and her daughter and H.S.H. the Duchess of Teck.

CALENDAR OF DICKENS QUOTATIONS

COMPILED BY "OLD FLEET"

Feb. 1.—"The plain rule is to do nothing in the dark, to be a party to nothing underhand or mysterious."—*Bleak House*—Mrs. Bagnot.

Feb. 2.—"In all the story-books as ever I read, the people as looked backward was turned into stone, and my opinion always was that they brought it on themselves, and it served 'em right."—*Martin Chuzzlewit*—Mark Tapley.

Feb. 3.—"Many mistake bluntness for sincerity."—"*Sketches by Boz.*"

Feb. 4.—"It's enough for a man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people's."—*A Christmas Carol*—Scrooge.

Feb. 5. "The cares of the day, old moralists say,
Are quite enough to perplex one;
Then drive to-day's sorrow away till to-morrow,
And then put it off till the next one."—*The Village Coquettes.*

Feb. 6.—"Many a man who would have stood within a home dismantled, strong in his passions, has had the firmness of his nature conquered by the razing of an air-built castle."—*Martin Chuzzlewit.*

Feb. 7.—"The mountainous Alps on the one hand, or a humming-bird on the other, is nothing in point of workmanship to an honest man."—*The Old Curiosity Shop*—Mr. Witherden.

Feb. 8.—"Industry is the soul of business and the keystone of prosperity."—*Barnaby Rudge*—Sir John Chester.

Feb. 9.—"From rough outsides . . . serene and gentle influences often proceed."—*Bleak House.*

Feb. 10.—"I would sooner love the most implacable man in the world than a careless one, who, if my place were empty to-morrow, would rub on and never miss me."—*Letter to John Forster.*

Feb. 11.—"You recollect what pavement is said to be made of good intentions. It is made of bad intentions too."—*Our Mutual Friend*—Eugene Wrayburn.

Feb. 12.—"Let us . . . thank God that the innocent joys of others can strongly move us, and that we, even in our fallen nature, have one source of pure emotion which must be prized in heaven."—*The Old Curiosity Shop.*

Feb. 13.—"It is a fair, even-handed, noble adjustment of things, that while there is infection in disease and sorrow, there is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good-humour."—*A Christmas Carol.*

Feb. 14.—"She'll vish there wos more, and that's the great art o' letter-writin'."—*Pickwick Papers*—Sam Weller.

Feb. 15.—"There are shades in all good pictures, but there are lights too if we choose to contemplate them."—*Nicholas Nickleby*—The Merry-faced Gentleman.

Feb. 16.—"Life is made of ever so many partings welded together."—*Great Expectations*—Joe Gargery.

Feb. 17.—"Half a loaf's better than no bread, and the same remark holds good with the crumbs."—*Dombey and Son*—Captain Cuttle.

Feb. 18.—"I hope that real love and truth are stronger in the end than any evil or misfortune in the world."—*David Copperfield*—Agnes Wickfield.

Feb. 19.—"Some men change their opinions from necessity, others from expediency, others from inspiration."—"*Sketches by Boz.*"

Feb. 20.—"The man who knows only one subject is next tiresome to the man who knows no subject."—*The Wreck of the Golden Mary.*

Feb. 21.—"The envious man beholds his neighbour's honours even in the sky."—*Barnaby Rudge.*

Feb. 22.—"Only the wisdom that holds the clue to all mysteries can surely know to what extent a man . . . can impose upon himself."—*Little Dorrit.*

Feb. 23.—"When a frank manner is offensive, it is because it is strained and feigned."—*A Message from the Sea.*

Feb. 24.—"Men are always fickle, always were, and always will be."—*Nicholas Nickleby*—Matilda Price.

Feb. 25.—"He had—as most men who have grown up to be great and good are generally found to have had—an excellent mother."—*A Child's History of England.*

Feb. 26.—"Solitary men are accustomed unconsciously to look upon solitude as their own peculiar privilege."—*Master Humphrey's Clock.*

Feb. 27.—"Very little handles will move men and women to as strange performances as any toy was ever made to undertake."—*The Cricket on the Hearth.*

Feb. 28.—"We must meet reverses boldly, and not suffer them to frighten us. We must learn to act the play out. We must live misfortunes down."—*David Copperfield*—Betsey Trotwood.

THE DICKENS FELLOWSHIP

HERE, THERE, AND EVERYWHERE

LONDON

AS had been anticipated, the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, was crowded on Wednesday, January 4th, when Mr. Frank Speaight gave his recital of "Pickwick" in six chapters. Mr. Arthur Waugh was in the chair, and in opening the meeting referred to the Meals for Poor Children Fund, and appealed for more liberal help. He remarked that as a result of the lack of interest shown by the members in Mr. Speaight's recital of "A Christmas Carol," on December 16th, the Fund had lost about £2 or £3. He asked that members should demonstrate that they had the spirit of the Fellowship and of Charles Dickens more at heart than this result would seem to imply. As a result of Mr. Waugh's appeal, a collection which was taken during an interval realised the splendid sum of £10 6*s*.

Of Mr. Speaight's recital little need be said. Mr. Speaight is well known to our London members and to many of our provincial members now as a brilliant interpreter of the works of the master novelist, and on this occasion he justified the splendid reputation that he has earned for himself to the full. He was listened to with unwavering attention during the whole of the two hours that he was on the platform, and constantly was interrupted by unrestrained laughter. As Buzfuz he was inimitable, and his rendering of the trial scene was really brilliant.

DINNERS TO WAIFS AND STRAYS

THE fund provided by members and friends of the Fellowship for the above purpose amounted on January 31st to £90 7*s*. So far four dinners have been given. On December 29th, at the Orchard House, All Saints', Poplar, 100 children enjoyed a good meal and entertainment; at the Lady Ashburton Memorial Hall, Custom House, on January 11th and 18th, 350 sat down on each occasion to a liberal repast, and were afterwards entertained by the recently organised Fairy Tale Society, the two dinners being under the management of the newly-formed Forest Gate Branch, which had contributed £25 to the General Fund; and at the Lycett Memorial Chapel, Mile End, on the 26th, 500 more were similarly treated. During February it is hoped to arrange dinners at "The Old Mahogany Bar," Wellclose Square, and at St. John's Parish Hall, Stamford Hill. The arrangements for these dinners are in the hands of Mr. W. J. Gadsden, who would be glad to hear from members who are willing to assist.

NEEDLEWORK AND CHARITABLE GUILD

JANUARY was a very busy month. The Guild was almost overwhelmed with cases of distress, and large supplies of clothing were distributed, especially in the Tottenham district, where they were much needed. A house-to-house visitation unearthed many tales of silent suffering, and as much was done as possible with limited funds. A "Dickens Pence" fund has been started, and every member of the Fellowship can help in this—lay aside one penny each week for the benefit of the Guild, and send it to the Secretary at headquarters.

Manchester is forming a branch of the Guild, and hopes to do good work in the near future. York has this month given a tea to crippled and maimed little ones, and the ladies of that branch have supplied a large amount of work from their Guild. At home the "lending library" is providing supplies of papers and periodicals to the sick; each week fresh parcels find their way to hospitals and individual cases. One day each week is spent at the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children, where the Guild now have twelve little patients under Miss Edith Hawthorn, who gives them special massage treatment for cases of contracted limbs. The doctors are highly gratified by the good result of this section of the work of the Guild.

SHEFFIELD AND DISTRICT BRANCH

THE January meeting was held on January 20th at the Cutlers' Hall. The Chairman of Committee, Mr. R. W. Dodsworth, presided over a good attendance. Mr. C. R. Smith gave a reading of "The Death of Jo," from *Bleak House*, which was greatly appreciated. Mr. J. W. Lee read a splendid paper on "Dickens, the Children's Friend." He pointed out how Dickens championed the cause of the children, who, in his time, were on the whole "looked down upon and kept under." He attacked the different school life in all parts of the country; he attacked the evils of "cramming," of isolation from family, of the boarding-school for too young children, and of uninteresting methods of instruction. Mr. Lee went on to show the good work that Dickens did in attracting the attention of society to its public institutions, especially the orphan asylums and poor-houses.

The Branch also held a smoking concert on the 27th in the Angel Hotel, an old coaching-house reminiscent of the days of which Dickens loved to write. There was a large attendance, and the gathering was highly enjoyable. Mr. Padmore, the Secretary, was in the chair. Those who contributed to an excellent programme were Messrs. Dodsworth, Shirley, A. Jones, Thornton, H. Wilkins, A. Hobson, E. Darwin, H. K. Marples, G. Pearson, E. Callum, Shires, and C. R. Smith.

Mr. W. F. Jackson, of Mount View, has been elected a Vice-President of the Branch, which has now 250 members.

BRISTOL AND CLIFTON DICKENS SOCIETY (AFFILIATED)

THIS Society held a most successful conversazione on January 17th, in the C.M.S. Hall, Park Street. There was a large gathering, and many of the ladies and gentlemen appeared in Dickens character costumes, among the characters thus impersonated being Daniel Peggotty, Dora, Tommy Traddles, "The Vengeance," Mr. Jarndyce, Dot, Peerybingle, Mr. Winkle, Mr. Toots, Susan Nipper, Sam Weller's Mary, "R. W." ("The Cherub"), Miss Tox, the "Artful Dodger," Kate Nickleby, and Mr. Dick. Prizes were offered for the best and most real costume. Mr. J. J. Sheesby won the gentleman's prize (a portrait of Dickens in a silver frame) for his splendid presentment of Mr. Peggotty; and Miss Bruford won the lady's prize (a handsome hand-painted plaque) for her representation of "the Vengeance." Miss Peacock, who appeared as Kate Nickleby, received a consolation prize.

During the evening Mr. G. R. Wilkinson read an admirable "appreciation" of Dickens. An excellent musical programme was contributed to by Mr. Mitchell, Mr. C. W. Birth, Miss Bruford, Miss Vida Sheesby, Miss Bee Sheesby, Mr. R. W. Martin, Mrs. A. R. Lee, Mr. Knee, Mr. H. Theo. Jones, and Mr. Down. The lady members of the Committee are to be heartily congratulated on the arrangement of a delightful evening's entertainment.

MANCHESTER BRANCH

"CHARLES DICKENS and his Friends" was the subject of an interesting address by Mr. E. J. Collings, of Bolton, in the Chartered Accountants' Hall, on January 6th. Mr. Collings spoke of the associations of many famous men with Dickens. He ranged from George Augustus Sala to Douglas Jerrold, Clarkson Stanfield, John Forster, and Letitia E. Landon. Referring to Jerrold, he said that Dickens gave that famous humorist a suggestion for another "curtain lecture," on the text of Mr. Caudle having remarked, off-handedly, that the housemaid was good-looking. Jerrold, however, did not live to do this. Mr. Collings's address was rendered doubly interesting by the exhibition of many pictures, letters, etc., reminiscences of Dickens, and forming part of his unique collection.

PORTSMOUTH BRANCH

DURING the month two excellent meetings were held, one on the 9th, the other on the 23rd. At the former the Portsmouth Pierrots gave their services and carried out a diversified programme of part-songs, choruses, and negro melodies. The concert was in aid of the fund for giving 600 poor children a tea and entertainment on Dickens's birthday, and the Pierrots, who furnished the entertainment, also contributed 21*s.* towards that object. The latter concert was in aid of the same fund, but owing to counter attractions the attendance was very disappointing. The programme was an attractive one and thoroughly enjoyed. Mr. Alexander Tucker, of the Patti Concert Party, gave no less than eight songs, one of which was "Cap'en Cuttle." There were also well-rendered recitations from Dickens's books, including "A Child's Dream of a Star" (Miss Richardson), "Doctor Marigold" (Mr. Richardson). Mr. Richardson, the local cartoonist, gave a sketching display, in which he introduced a portrait of Dickens and of Sir Henry Irving. During the interval Alderman Emanuel read letters from Sir Henry Irving and Sir A. Conan Doyle wishing every success to the Fellowship and its work. The text of Sir Henry Irving's letter is given on page 42. On the night of the concert Portsmouth had 777 members.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH

THE fourth dinner of the season to children was given on the 19th at St. Michael's Schools, Cornwallis Street, when 250 little ones were entertained to a substantial meal of hot-pot, cakes, and bananas. After the dinner an entertainment was given, in which Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Browne, Mr. and Miss Bachner, Messrs. Heazell, Graham, and Weir took part. Many ladies and gentlemen belonging to the Fellowship acted as stewards, and waited on the children.

The first meeting of this branch for the year was held on January 4th in the Common Hall, when a lecture was given by the Rev. J. H. Martyn, on "Rochester and its associations with Dickens." There was a good attendance. The lecture itself was illustrated by a splendid set of views.

The lecturer showed how the whole city was interwoven with some of Dickens's works, and especially with that masterpiece "The Mystery of Edwin Drood," where Cloisterham was but a thin disguise of Rochester.

On January 25th a concert and dramatic performance were held; the latter being a sketch based on *David Copperfield*, given by the Liver Amateur Dramatic Society; this function was also very successful, every seat in the hall being occupied, and a number of new members being enrolled.

NOTTINGHAM BRANCH

A MEETING was held in the Mechanics' Institute on Friday, January 6th, when Miss Brinckman, of London (impersonator of Dickens's female characters), recited "The Vengeance" (*Tale of Two Cities*) and "Rosa Dartle" (*David Copperfield*). Mr. Hinton Edwards, the Hon. Secretary, read "Old Cheeseman," from the reprinted pieces.

STOCKPORT BRANCH

THE monthly meeting was held on the 18th, when the Rev. C. N. Dove gave a paper on Charles Dickens. He deplored the superficial knowledge of Dickens's works which existed to-day. A familiar quotation was on the lips of many, but that was all. The speaker gave a brief outline of the life of Dickens, and examined in detail his writings, emphasising his love for children, the high standard of his types of womanhood, his power of satire, and the general moral tone of his works.

SOUTHAMPTON AND DISTRICT BRANCH

THE third entertainment was given on January 19th at No. 140, High Street, the President, Dr. A. Graham, in the chair. An excellent reading from *Martin Chuzzlewit* was given by Mrs. Anderson. Some pianoforte solos and duets were well rendered by the Misses Gadd, E. Child and G. Hill, also songs by Miss Mason and Mr. Sprague; the latter also contributed a reading "The Five Sisters of York." Mr. F. Davis gave a splendid reading of "The Bagman's Story." Several new members were elected during the evening.

BRIXTON BRANCH

A MEETING of this branch was held on Monday, January 9th, at the Ladies Parlour, Brixton Independent Church. The programme included a debate on the solution of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* and readings by members. The chair was taken by the President, Mr. P. A. Jones. Mr. R. Allbut introduced the subject of the evening, reading a letter sent by him (when in New York thirty years since) to the *Union* newspaper, in reference to a preposterous so-called "sequel" to *Edwin Drood*, as copied from *The Banner of Light*, the latter being the special organ of spiritualism. General interchange of opinion ensued, and it was, of course, agreed that an accurate solution of the mystery—in accordance with the mind of the master—was impossible. An interesting reading from *The Haunted House* was given by Mr. R. J. Block in capital style, and two songs were effectively rendered by Miss Hoch.

On Wednesday, January 25th, at the Horbury Rooms, Notting Hill Gate, an evening's entertainment was given under the auspices of the Horbury Literary Society, by some friends connected with the Brixton Branch of the Dickens Fellowship. The programme included music and the following readings and recitals from Dickens's works: "The Child's Story" (Mr. R. Allbut); "The Death of Sydney Carton" (Miss Jessie Pearce); "Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness" (Mr. Howard Rose), and "The Schoolboy's Story" (Mr. R. Allbut), all of which were well received by a full and appreciative audience.

YORK BRANCH

THE second half of the session was opened in the Merchants' Hall, Fossgate, on January 11th, when Councillor Thomas Anderson read a paper on "A Tale of Two Cities." Mr. J. Waddington presided over a fair attendance. In the course of an instructive and interesting paper, Mr. Anderson said Dickens's brilliant and pathetic story had a vivid and stirring opening to the still more vivid and stirring scenes. The description was clear and incisive, and it was a picture that burned itself into one's mind, and which could never be forgotten. After quoting some of the earlier passages and the prosecution of Darney, he referred to the causes of the French Revolution, and said that Dickens, with his keen insight into human affairs, knew that want on the part of a whole populace had always been the danger signal pointing the way to revolution. Sydney Carton's sacrifice was the noblest, the purest, and the most disinterested act that any man could accomplish, and of all Dickens's characters his was the most sublime conception of the height to which humanity could reach. A short discussion, in which Mr. Grimes spoke of the high ideal of Carton, followed, and Mr. Mattchett, of the London Fellowship, gave some particulars of Dickens and dramatically and graphically recited the passage in *Bleak House* describing Mrs. Bagnett's birthday-party. A tea was given by members to over 200 poor children on January 6th. An entertainment followed and each child was presented with fruit and a toy on leaving.

BLACKHEATH, LEE, AND LEWISHAM BRANCH

DURING last month this branch was very busy. Besides the usual monthly meeting on 20th, at which Mr. Woodford Sowray, a well-known member of the Council, read a paper on "Dickensian Humbugs," the members entertained over a hundred old people to a good dinner and concert.

"Dickensian Humbugs," from the books of the great novelist, were cleverly portrayed in Mr. Sowray's able and thoughtful paper. Mr. G. Willis presided. Mr. Sowray showed a wide knowledge of the subject, and gave an apt selection from interesting illustrative passages. Dickens had, said the lecturer, a poor idea in his younger days of the utility of Parliament, and he saw the humbug of party government of that period. Treating of the religious humbugs of the great novelist's works, Mr. Sowray showed that these would at the present time be impossible characters. There were, however, different types of this class of humbugs now existing. Uriah Heep, Pecksniff, and other hypocrites were also admirably dealt with.

The dinner to one hundred old people was given at Shrubbery Road Schools, Lewisham, on Friday, 13th January, and consisted of roast beef and mutton, baked potatoes, Brussels sprouts, Christmas puddings and mince pies, tea and coffee. After dinner there was an entertainment contributed to by members and the Milanese Orchestra.

ROCHESTER BRANCH

THE monthly meeting was held in the "Pickwick" Ballroom of the Bull Hotel, on Thursday, January 12th, to hear a paper by Mr. J. H. Whitfield, entitled "Henry Fielding and Charles Dickens." The chair was taken by Mr. John Hepworth. Fielding, the lecturer said, provided his readers with substantial British fare, good solid roast beef and plum pudding—sometimes, indeed, too highly spiced. Dickens's style is more varied, and although equally strong, vigorous, and substantial, more dainty and delicately flavoured. Both writers possessed great descriptive power, but Dickens's touch is the lighter, while the picture is no less but rather the more firmly drawn. In his early works Dickens evidently sought inspiration from Fielding, and passages suggested by his study of the earlier master may be found in *Pickwick*, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, and others. Dickens's custom of building up or inventing names to suit his characters is clearly traceable to Fielding's influence. In the first chapter of *Tom Jones* Fielding describes three points to be aimed at in a good novel. These three points Dickens possessed in so remarkable degree that this chapter might almost have been written to-day as a friendly criticism of Dickens, who, in spite of the bypaths into which he wanders, always keeps the story moving. He differentiates in a marvellous manner between two similar characters, giving to each his own individuality; and thirdly, shows some good even in his worst characters. He had, too, an imaginative power which enabled him to enter thoroughly into the minds and feelings of his creations. Mr. Whitfield illustrated his paper by reading short extracts from the works of both novelists. The Hon. Secretary during the evening reported that the Estates Committee of the Rochester Corporation had accepted the offer of the Fellowship as to the planting of trees in memory of Charles Dickens, and that the first trees would be shortly planted. The list of subscriptions has now reached the sum of £15.

CHESTER (PENNSYLVANIA) BRANCH

UNDER the auspices of this branch, which is composed of a membership of public school teachers and those who love the author of that name, a lecture was given recently in Library Hall, Broad Street, by Prof. Francis H. Green, who talked most interestingly on "Dickens, the Camera-minded." He chose this title as illustrative of the famous author's ability to portray in words such wonderful pictures to the mind of his readers. The address was most delightful, being punctuated with witticisms for which Prof. Green justly is noted. The music of the evening was a feature, being particularly on the subject of the occasion.

BIRMINGHAM AND DISTRICT BRANCH

At the meeting held on Friday, January 13th, in the Athletic Institute, the papers were given by members of the Council. Mr. William Tidmarsh opened his paper with some brief remarks upon Mr. Kitton's *Life of Charles Dickens*, recommending it to the members for their reading, as throughout the whole book there were evidences of knowledge of, and love for, the master. He then more fully dealt with the detractors of Dickens. These, he said, were many, and he carried the audience back to what was said against him before many of those present were born. Some were very scathing and severe, others milder. Very largely, he said, the hostile criticism was the result of a real appreciation of his aims and intentions. Lord Macaulay, while refusing to be a critic, yet wrote some very hard things about him. Mr. E. J. Timings's paper was on Charles Dickens and his cotemporary Thackeray. He said that many condemned each for his sarcasm. Thackeray wrote that his little daughter once asked him why he did not write a book like Mr. Dickens, and he had to admit his inability to do so. He said he knew she was a great admirer of Dickens, for when she was happy she read *Nicholas Nickleby*, when sad the same, also when well and when ill; when she went to bed it was *Nickleby*, when she awoke still the same. Mr. E. Moore, who read the third paper, dwelt upon the nobleness of Dickens's character, his high purpose, his lofty aims, and his wonderful humanity. He was, he said, always looking out for an opportunity to render to some one a "good turn."

SHREWSBURY BRANCH

Mr. Frank Speaight gave a recital of *Pickwick*, in six chapters, in the Working Men's Hall, on January 18th, for the benefit of the poor of Shrewsbury. The Mayor (Mr. H. J. Hearn) presided, and said it gave him very great pleasure to associate himself with the Shrewsbury Branch of the Dickens Fellowship, more especially as the proceeds of that gathering were to be devoted to an object which would have appealed to no one more strongly than to Charles Dickens. He understood that the branch was formed in 1902, with a membership of nineteen, which he was pleased to say had already increased to upwards of forty. He sincerely hoped that as a result of that gathering the membership would be still more largely augmented. Of Mr. Speaight's admirable elocutionary powers it is impossible to speak in too high praise. Even to students of Dickens, who are accustomed to revel in the inimitable humour of the *Pickwick Papers*, the genius of the great master was more fully revealed, while to those people to whom his works are not known an endless fund of enjoyment was revealed. The recital should have the effect of strengthening the already great influence of the Dickens Society, and of reviving local interest in the great master's work. At the close a vote of thanks was passed to the Mayor for presiding, on the motion of Mr. John Pool.

FOREST GATE AND DISTRICT BRANCH

On January 25th a meeting was held at Forest Gate to consider a proposal to form a branch of the Fellowship in the district. There was a good attendance, among those present being Mr. B. W. Matz, Vice-Chairman of the Council, and Mr. J. W. T. Ley, Hon. Gen. Sec. It was unanimously resolved to form a branch to be known as the Forest Gate and District Branch, and Mr. Thos. Webb, 78, Osborne Road, Forest Gate, E., was elected Hon. Sec. Mr. S. Mawer, 431, Romford Road, Forest Gate, was appointed Hon. Treasurer. There are abundant signs that the branch will prove a complete success.

HASTINGS AND ST. LEONARDS BRANCH

On January 11th Mr. Harry Furniss, President of the Hastings and St. Leonards Branch, attended a meeting at the Holy Trinity Parish Room, and gave an inaugural address. Mr. T. Larkin, J.P., presided.

Mr. Furniss said that from the first moment that he had been able to read he had been a worshipper of Dickens. He pointed out that when Dickens was at the highest pinnacle of popularity England had many more great writers than at the present time. Mr. Furniss spoke for nearly an hour on many matters appertaining to Dickens. He read a letter to show that Dickens was the first to realise that George Eliot was a woman. He referred to the high characteristics of Dickens, and spoke of him as a supreme critic, and as possessing a wonderful insight into character. He remarked that to be able to understand a newspaper nowadays it was necessary to learn Dickens. Only recently he had seen four separate references to the novelist in one paper. Honesty and kindness were characteristics of Dickens, who was a thorough Bohemian, and as sincere to himself as to the public. Mr. Furniss concluded by appealing for new members of the Fellowship, and by promising to do all in his power to further the objects they had in view.

Cordial votes of thanks were passed to Mr. Furniss and to the chairman. Duets and songs and recitations were contributed by members.

WEST LONDON SUBURBAN BRANCH

The January meeting of this branch took the form of a reading of *A Christmas Carol* by five members, namely Mr. H. C. Tyrrell (Stave 1), Dr. Marx (Stave 2), Mr. J. M. C. Jacobs (Stave 3), Mr. W. Chevob (Stave 4), and Mr. W. Howard (Stave 5). All the readers displayed elocutionary powers of no mean order, and no greater praise can be given than to say that justice was done to every part of the great story. The attendance at this meeting was larger than at any previous meeting this season, the room being completely filled. Mr. J. H. Watson presided.

POETICAL TRIBUTES TO CHARLES DICKENS

II

ON HIS PROPOSED VOYAGE TO AMERICA, 1842

PSHAW! Away with leaf and berry,
And the sober-sided cup!
Bring a Goblet and bright Sherry!
And a bumper fill me up—
Tho' I had a pledge to shiver,
And the largest ever was,—
Ere his vessel leaves our river,
I will drink a health to "Boz"!

Here's success to all his antics,
Since it pleases him to roam,
And to paddle o'er Atlantics,
After such a sale at home!
May he shun all rocks whatever,
And the shallow sand that lurks,—
And his Passage be as clever
As the best among his works!

THOMAS HOOD.

The New Monthly Magazine, *February*, 1842.

DIARY OF DICKENS MEETINGS

Feb. 2. Maidstone Branch: "With the Camera in Dickens-land," by H. Snowden Ward, at Hollingworth Hall Institute.

,, 6. Brixton Branch: Readings by Mr. J. S. Baines and Mr. J. Cartwright.

,, 7. Portsmouth Branch: Dickens Birthday Tea-Party to 600 children in Southsea Pier Pavilion.

,, 7. Nottingham Branch: Dickens Birthday Celebration.

,, 7. Birmingham Branch: Dickens Birthday Celebration.

,, 7. Ryde (Isle of Wight) Branch: Dickens Birthday Celebration. Recital of "Pickwick Papers" by Mr. F. Speaight at Town Hall. Mayor in the chair.

,, 8. Bristol Branch: Dickens Anniversary Dinner at Chivers's Restaurant, Queen's Road.

,, 8. London: Dickens Birthday Celebration. The President, Mr. Henry F. Dickens, K.C., in the chair, supported by Mr. Percy Fitzgerald and many Vice-Presidents. Dickens character impersonations by Mr. Bransby Williams. Recitals by Mr. Frank Speaight and Mr. A. Hayes. At Memorial Hall at 8.

,, 8. Edinburgh Branch: Dickens Birthday Celebration.

,, 8. Sheffield Branch: Dickens Birthday Celebration at Cutlers' Hall.

,, 8. Liverpool Branch: Dinner and Entertainment to poor children.

,, 8. Southampton Branch: Dickens Birthday Celebration.

,, 8. York Branch: Dickens Birthday Celebration.

,, 8. Manchester Branch: Dickens Birthday Celebration, at Town Hall. Lord Mayor in the chair. Special address: "Dickens and the Victorian Era," by Sir Wm. H. Bailey.

,, 8. Brighton Branch: Dickens Birthday Celebration.

,, 9. Rochester Branch: Recital of "David Copperfield" by Mr. Frank Speaight at Castle Hall.

,, 14. Winnipeg Branch: Papers by members and talk on "Places made famous by Dickens."

,, 15. Liverpool Branch: "Short Stories and Short Story Writers," by Mr. John Lea.

,, 15. Stockport Branch: Conversazione in Librarian's Room, Sunday School.

,, 15. Southampton Branch: Recital of "Pickwick Papers" by Mr. Frank Speaight at Hartley Hall.

,, 16. Beeston: Dickens Recital, by Mr. Arthur W. Hayes, at Station Road Schools, 7.30.

,, 16. West London Branch: Meeting at Church Road Mission Hall, Hanwell.

,, 17. Sheffield Branch: Papers and Readings at Cutlers' Hall.

,, 17. Blackheath Branch: "Character Studies from 'David Copperfield,'" by Rev. E. Louis Clapton.

,, 20. Portsmouth Branch: Concert arranged by Mrs. Maggs.

,, 21. Bristol Branch: Public Representation of "The Trial Scene from 'Pickwick Papers,'" at C.M.S. Hall.

,, 22. York Branch: "Micawber," by Mr. T. P. Cooper.

,, 23. Edinburgh Branch: "The Social Influence of Dickens," by Rev. Dr. Glasse.

,, 23. Stroud Green Branch: Recital of "David Copperfield" by Mr. Frank Speaight at Ferme Park Baptist Chapel.

,, 27. Brixton Branch: Evening arranged by Mr. and Mrs. Skeen.

,, 28. Sheffield Branch: Recital of "Pickwick Papers" by Mr. Frank Speaight at Montgomery Hall.

,, 28. Winnipeg Branch: "Sketches of Dickens's Young Men," by Dr. Munro.

DICKENSIANA MONTH BY MONTH

BOOKS

Synopses of Dickens's Novels. By J. Walker McSpadden. 12mo, 2*s.* 6*d.* net. London: Chapman and Hall, Limited, 11, Henrietta Street, W.C.

Dickens. By W. Teignmouth Shore. Pott 8vo. Illustrated. 1*s.* net; leather, 2*s.* net. "Bell's Miniature Series Great Writers." London: George Bell and Sons, Portugal Street, Lincoln's Inn, W.C.

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

"Great Writers." I. Charles Dickens. With portrait. *The School Newspaper*, January 2nd.

"Household Words and Taxes on Education." *Household Words*, January 7th.

"Uriah Heep's ''Umble Home.'" Illustrated. *The People*, January 8th.

"Biographical Notes on Dickens and Thackeray." By W. F. Prideaux. *Notes and Queries*, January 14th.

Our Dickens Examinations. "Christmas Books" Competition—Result. *The Easy Chair*, January 14th.

"The Decline and Fall of Silas Wegg." By Leicester Romayne. *The Easy Chair*, January 14th.

"The Dickens Ball." Some characters that will appear and some that probably won't. Illustrated. *The Morning Leader*, January 16th.

Our Dickens Examinations. "Nicholas Nickleby" Competition—Result. *The Easy Chair*, January 21st.

"Dickens and Hans Andersen." By B. W. Matz. *The Easy Chair*, January 21st.

Mr. Fotheringham's Bingley Lectures. "Charles Dickens." *Keighley News*, January 21st.

"The Dickens Dance." Illustrated. *Weekly Dispatch*, January 22nd.

"A Dickens Dance." Characters from the novels will be admitted. "Boz" costumes. Charles Dickens's grandchildren will dance Sir Roger. *Weekly Dispatch*, January 22nd.

"Dickens Character Ball." A novelty in charitable entertainments. *Westminster Gazette*, January 26th.

"Dickens Ballroom." Five hundred dancers to be dressed as novelist's characters. *Daily Chronicle*, January 27th.

"Dickens and Street Music." *T. P.'s Weekly*, January 27th.

"Revolutionists at Work." By Charles Dickens. With a portrait and illustration. *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, January 28th.

"The Dickens Dance." Novelist's grandson to be Little Nell's grandfather. A Mrs. Quilp. *Weekly Dispatch*, January 29th.

"A Dickens Dance." *Daily Telegraph*, January 31st.

"Dickens Character Ball." *Westminster Gazette*, January 31st.

"Fiction in Fancy Dress." Characters from Dickens at a ball. Illustrated. *Daily Chronicle*, January 31st.

"In Touch with Dickens." Grandchildren of the great novelist in Dickens's characters. Illustrated. *Morning Leader*, January 31st.

"The Dickens Ball," costume and charity. The Charles Dickens Ball Last Night. Illustrated. *Daily Express*, January 31st.

"For the Benefit of a Charity, Sir." Dickens characters at a fancy ball. Illustrated. *The Daily Graphic*, February 1st.

"A Bit of Bill Sikes's London." Illustrated. *The Daily Graphic*, February 1st.

"The Dickens Characters Ball at the Empress Rooms." Drawn by John Hassall. *The Sketch*, February 1st

"Dickens as a Matchmaker." The "Master" as the friend of wayward lovers. *Answers*, February 4th.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BRANCHES AND WINTER PROGRAMMES

To the Editor of "The Dickensian"

DEAR SIR,—As I am commencing to prepare the syllabus for the Session 1905–6 for this branch, it will be assistance to me, and possibly to other branch secretaries, if some of the members of the Fellowship will send to you their ideas of the form that our meetings should take.

So far we have had readings from, and papers upon, Charles Dickens and his works, concluding the session with a social evening.

This arrangement does not altogether meet the requirements of all our members, and other things have been suggested to me, but before preparing a scheme to lay before our members I should like to know what other branches are doing.

Sincerely yours, FRANK YOXALL,
Hon. Secretary Birmingham and District Branch.

62, STAMFORD ROAD, HANDSWORTH, BIRMINGHAM,
January 23rd, 1905.

DO WE DESPISE DICKENS?

To the Editor of "The Dickensian"

DEAR SIR,—I congratulate you on Number 1 of *The Dickensian*, which will, I feel sure, be welcomed with much satisfaction by all admirers of the great novelist.

There are two questionable statements in it which should perhaps receive some notice. On p. 17 Sir David Hunter is reported to have said at Durban that he thought Dickens had created certain of his characters—Sam Weller, for instance. But this is not the opinion of the eminent German traveller, Dr. Carl Peters, as in his latest book, entitled *Engländ und die Engländer*, he remarks: "The Sam Wellers are no mere imaginary portraits. They exist everywhere, driving omnibuses and cabs, in waterside taverns and London bars."

Again, we are told (p. 14) that Mrs. Baillie Saunders declares "we as a nation now despise Dickens." This will probably come as a little surprise to most of us. If facts have any meaning, Mrs. Saunders is under a misapprehension. The huge sale of his works, the statistics of public libraries, the perpetual allusion to his characters in the press, the many recitals and readings based on his stories, the extensive purchase of even calendars and picture post cards dealing with scenes from Dickens, all prove that he is the most popular figure in the ranks of English literature. And my own knowledge, as far as it goes, of the likes and dislikes of intelligent people, leads to a conclusion very different from that formed by Mrs. Saunders. No doubt there are sections of the community who have an antipathy to Dickens. It was the same in his own days, for we find Jeffrey writing him: "All the tribe of selfishness and cowardice and cant will hate you in their hearts and cavil when they can; will accuse you of wicked exaggeration and incitement to discontent, and what they pleasantly call dissatisfaction. But never mind. The good and the brave are with you, and the truth also." The classes mentioned by Jeffrey cannot be expected to love Dickens. They will continue to abhor him; but, as for "despising" him, they are not in a position to do it!

Yours very truly, J. G. TAYLOR.

2, LEAZES TERRACE, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE,
February 2nd, 1905.

THE GOLDEN CROSS, CHARING CROSS, CIRCA 1827.
SHOWING THE HOTEL AS IT WAS IN THE PICKWICKIAN DAYS.
From *The Dickens Country*, by F. G. Kitton, by kind permission of the publishers, Messrs. A. and C. Black.